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A Seventeenth-Century Typological Cycle of Paintings in the Armenian Cathedral at Julfa

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century Lambert Lombard sketched both Victories from the Arch of Constantine. (Pl. 63f.) It is difficult to decide whether Ripa took the winged female allegory of history from Trajan's column, from Roman coins, which were known to him through Sebastiano Erizzo's *Discorso sopra le Medaglie degli Antichi*, 1559<sup>1</sup>, or from the Arch of Constantine, though the latter is the most likely source since the prisoner at the feet of Victory seems to have been the model for the Saturn in Ripa's woodcut (Pl. 63b). It makes little difference, however, for the derivation of all these representations is the same.

The ancestry of this crude woodcut of Historia in the early editions of the *Iconologia* is even more distinguished than has appeared so far.<sup>2</sup> The whole group of "writing Victories," to which belongs also the famous bronze figure in the Museum at Brescia, was derived from a hellenistic type of Venus, who uses a shield as a mirror. The Venus of Capua (Naples, Museo Nazionale) represents this type, which can be traced back at least to the third century B.C.<sup>3</sup>

The remainder of Ripa's allegory is also of classical origin. Explaining the presence of Saturn, he writes: "Se le mette à canto Saturno, perche l'Historia è detta da Marco Tullio, testimonia dei tempi, maestra della Vita, luce della memoria & spirito dell' attioni." This simply paraphrases a famous passage from Cicero, "Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae . . .,"<sup>4</sup> which had been used before by Renaissance writers.<sup>5</sup> In symbolizing time by the figure of Saturn Ripa is following the practice which he attributes to the ancients: ". . . che per l'Imagie di Saturno intendevano il Tempo . . ."<sup>6</sup>—a

definition which once more is based on Cicero.<sup>7</sup>

The writing Victory of the Flavians had been a straightforward image. Her shield rested against a column or a palm tree and her left foot, supporting the shield, was raised on a helmet. Ripa's allegory is far more sophisticated: the supports themselves—Saturn and the "square rock"—have acquired symbolic meaning, and the design is transformed. Yet we can still recognize the original pattern, even in this Mannerist disguise. Those who made use of this figure from the *Iconologia* were only giving a further lease of life to a classical concept.<sup>8</sup> As late as the nineteenth century, an image in a patriotic ode of the poet of the Risorgimento once more combines the concepts of Victory and History when the Victory of Brescia is made to say:

Io sono la forza del Lazio  
Traversante nel bronzo pe'tempi.<sup>9</sup>

L. D. ETTLINGER

#### A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TYPOLOGICAL CYCLE OF PAINTINGS IN THE ARMENIAN CATHEDRAL AT JULFA

In 1603 Shah 'Abbās, the great Safavid ruler of Persia, sent an expedition into Armenia in answer to the appeals of the inhabitants for assistance against the Turks. The death of the Sultan Mahmud III in December 1603 and the succession of his son Ahmed, a boy of twelve, opened the way to an easy conquest in the course of which both retreating Turks and invading Persians plundered the Armenians. The Persian victory was followed by a forced emigration of the population to the Shah's capital of Isfahan. "That dragon of hell, Shah 'Abbās, nourished from the beginning in the ways of the serpent, saw with an eye of envy the prosperity of the Christians." So Arakel of Tauriz, the seventeenth-century Armenian

<sup>1</sup> Erna Mandowsky, *Ricerche intorno all'Iconologia di Cesare Ripa*, Florence, 1939, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> In the Perugia edition of 1767, Vol. V, p. 234, Historia is actually writing on a shield, but the composition of the group is altered (see Pl. 63c).

<sup>3</sup> A. Furtwängler, *op. cit.*, p. 384ff. It seems that there are actually two different sources behind this conception of Victoria: (1) the derivation from the Venus of Capua type, which appears for example on the coin of Claudius mentioned above (p. 322, n. 5); (2) the Victory leaning her shield against a pillar or palm tree, standing between two trophies, which appears on Trajan's column. For the whole question see Lehmann-Hartleben, article cited.

<sup>4</sup> *De Oratore*, II, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Poliziano, *Praefatio in Suetonium*, from *Opera*, Bâle, 1553, p. 499.

<sup>6</sup> Ripa, *op. cit.*, Prooemio.

<sup>7</sup> "Saturnum autem eum esse voluerunt, qui cursum et conversionem spatiorum ac temporum contineret, qui deus Graece id ipsum nomen habet. Κρόνος enim dicitur; qui est idem χρόνος, id est, spatium temporis." Cicero, *De natura deorum*, II, 24, 65.

<sup>8</sup> Mandowsky, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>9</sup> G. Carducci, "Alla Vittoria," from *Odi Barbare*, Bologna, 1878, p. 73 ff.

historian, puts it, and it was indeed the skill of new craftsmen that the Shah sought for the city which he was transforming into one of the world's great masterpieces. The Armenians were driven across the river Araxe "without any Moses or Joshua to appease the waves": Armenia was left desolate, and "its churches, ornamented with paintings and sculptures" were abandoned to gradual ruin.<sup>1</sup> In Julfa however, the suburb of Isfahan in which the Armenians were settled, they were allowed to build churches and "to decorate them with paintings of the divine mysteries and images of the Saints." Arakel could not forgive Shah 'Abbās, but he had to admit that "he showed pity towards the Armenians and affection, false it is true but still affection."<sup>2</sup> The main church, the cathedral of St. Saviour, was built, as is stated by an inscription, between 1606 and 1654. It is in the form of a double cross with domes over the crossing of each of its two arms. The interior, which is admirably preserved, has a decorative scheme which combines Safavid ornamental motives with subject paintings which are based on Western models (Pls. 64, 65).<sup>3</sup> The walls are divided into six bands: the spandrels on either side of the single window; a row of Old Testament scenes, chosen as forecasting the life of Christ, which is shown in the third band; below this the fourth band is a decorative strip containing inset ovals with illustrations of the parables; the fifth a row of narrow horizontal paintings showing further scenes from the life of Christ and the martyrdom of various Armenian saints; the sixth is composed of broad panels of ornamental tiles. Two other churches, Bethlehem and St. Mary, are similar in style, and their decoration repeats some of the pictorial scenes, but far less fully than in the elaborate scheme of the cathedral.

Iconographically these paintings are worked out with remarkable thoroughness and with some unusual typological features. In the drum of the dome above the East crossing are scenes of the Creation and Fall to the death of Abel: the narrative is then continued in the South Arm of the Eastern

cross. In the spandrels are the Tower of Babel and the Dispersion of the Peoples. The scenes from the Old and New Testaments are as follows:<sup>4</sup>

Abraham entertains the Angels.  
The Annunciation.

Joseph interprets the moon and stars.  
The Angel appears to the Shepherds.

Hagar and Ishmael.  
The Nativity.

Abraham and Melchizedek.  
The Adoration.

The Persecution of the Israelites by the Egyptians.  
The Massacre of the Innocents.

Israelites bring offerings to Moses.  
The Presentation.

Coronation of Saul.  
Christ among the Doctors.

The Ark carried across Jordan.  
The Baptism.

(Spandrels of South wall of Western Cross:  
Tree of Jesse: Covenant with Abraham.)

Balaam's Ass.  
The Temptation.

Angels guide Lot from Sodom.  
Angels minister to Christ.

Moses shews the Tables of the Law.  
The Transfiguration.

The Ark brought into Jerusalem.  
Entry of Christ into Jerusalem.

The Calf of Gold.  
The Purging of the Temple.

(Spandrels of West wall: Stoning of Stephen:  
Ship of the Church.)

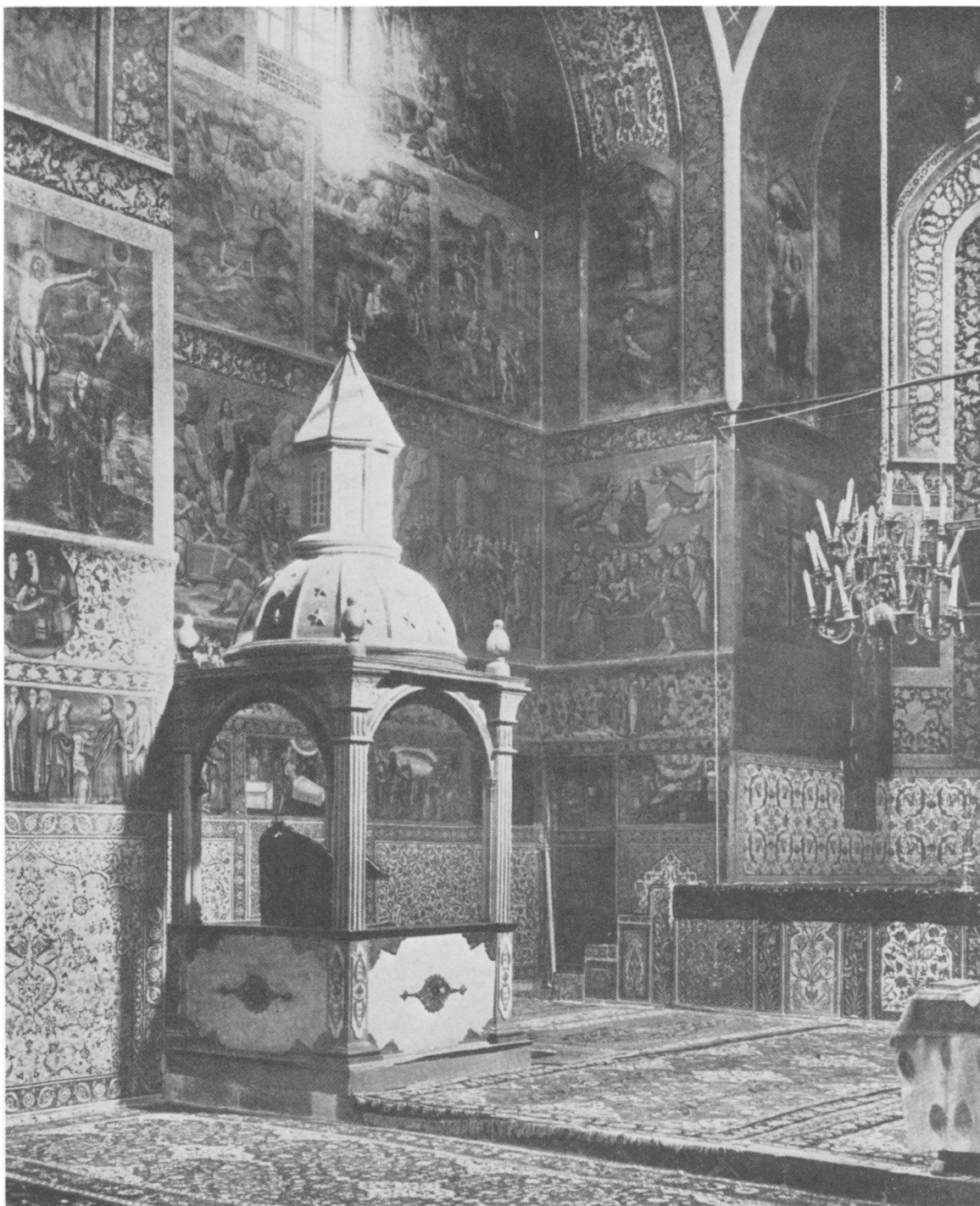
Elisha heals the water at Jericho  
(2 Kings, ii.).  
The Washing of the Feet.

<sup>1</sup> Arakel of Tauriz trs. M. Broset. *Collection d'histoires Arméniennes*, I, St. Petersburg, 1874, pp. 280, 289, 295.

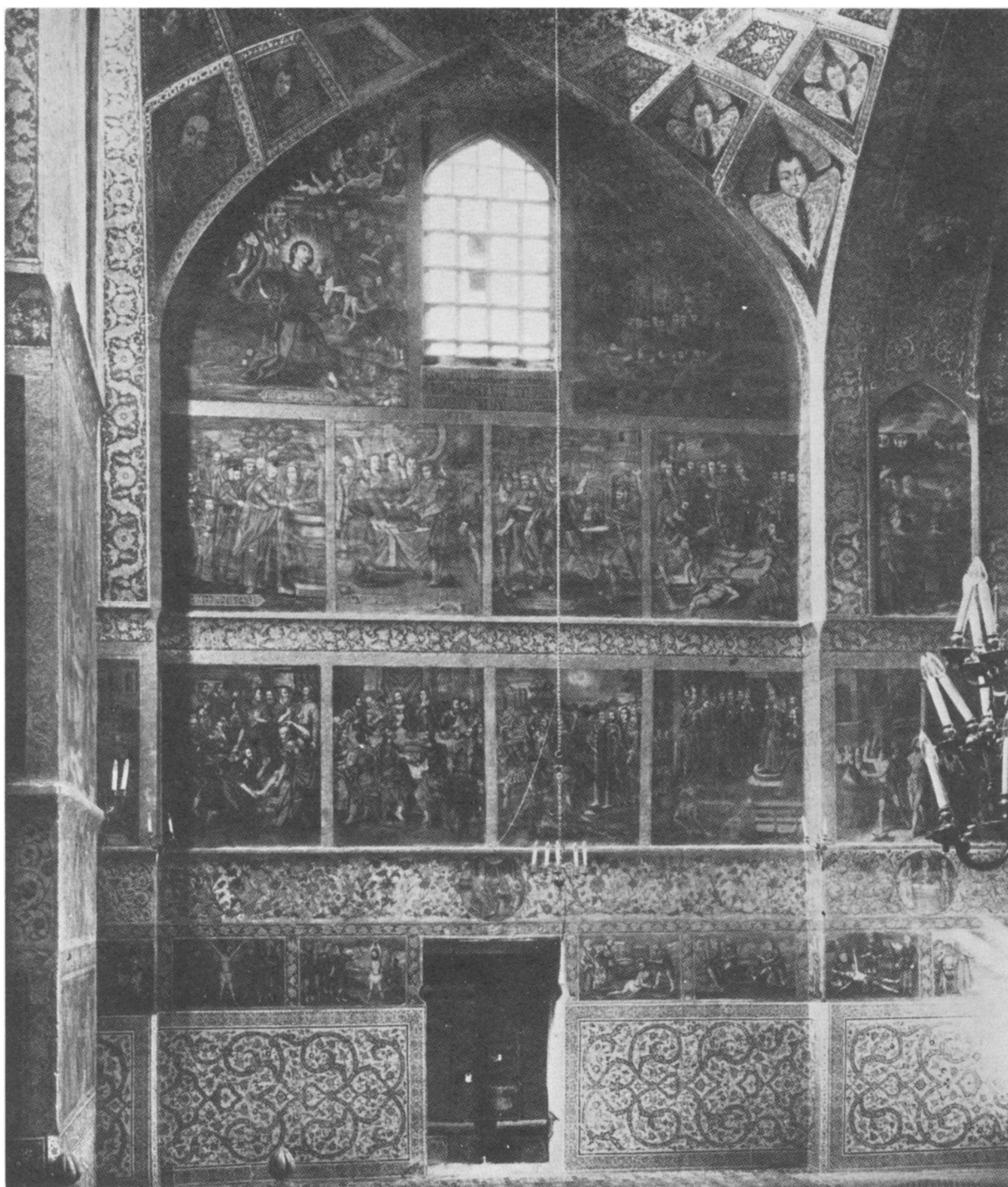
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Mr. A. F. Kersting for the photographs reproduced. They were taken during the war with very limited facilities and it was not possible to obtain details of the paintings. As far as I know no other photographs of the interior have ever been published.

<sup>4</sup> The scenes are not always easily identified, though in some cases there are inscriptions. These are naturally in Armenian and in a somewhat elaborate script: in two visits during the war I found considerable difficulty in getting any authoritative translation of them. I have been in some doubt as to one or two of the subjects, but the list as given may I think be taken as reliable.



Armenian Cathedral, Julfa, Persia, North-East Corner (*p.* 324 ff.)



Armenian Cathedral, Julfa, Persia, West End (*p.* 324 ff.)

The Passover.  
The Last Supper.

Shimei curses David.  
The Betrayal.

Judgment of Solomon.  
Christ before Caiaphas.

Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar.  
Scourging of Christ.

The North wall of the Western arm is entirely covered by a painting of the Last Judgment: the typological scenes continue on its short Eastern arm.

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife.  
Ecce Homo and the carrying of the Cross.

The Brazen Serpent.  
The Crucifixion.

Joseph lowered into the Pit.  
The Descent from the Cross.

(Spandrels of North wall of Eastern arm:  
the Flood: Noah leaving the Ark.)

Jonah and the Whale.  
The Entombment.

The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host.  
The Resurrection.

The Sacrifice of Isaac.  
The Ascension.

Moses striking water from the Rock.  
Pentecost.

The Burning Bush.  
The Assumption.

The paintings of the fourth and fifth bands are on a much smaller scale. The small ovals of the former contain in the Eastern arm some parables (the mote and the beam, the blind falling into the pit, the good Samaritan) and some scenes from the gospels (Mary anointing Christ's feet, the Noli Me Tangere and the Incredulity of St. Thomas). The Western arm has a series of the sacraments and twenty-one scenes of Armenian martyrdoms, these latter possibly somewhat later in date. The Western dome has four roundels with scenes from the apocalypse and in the soffits of the arches the stories of Samson, Gideon and Joshua.

The High Altar has a painting of the Transfiguration: in the semi-dome above are

the Trinity and the apostles. On the wall to either side of the apse recess are the Madonna and Child and the Cross surrounded by angels (North wall); Jacob's Ladder and the Preaching of John the Baptist (South wall).

Few churches can show an attempt to set out in greater detail the concordance of the Old and New Testaments. Many of the scenes selected, such as the Brazen Serpent and the Crucifixion, Jonah and the Whale and the Entombment, the Passover and the Last Supper, are traditional parallels dating back to the *Bible moralisée* or beyond. Other juxtapositions are less usual and in some cases the reasons for them not at once apparent. Of the first four pairs none is an accepted parallel though the relationship is intelligible enough: Abraham's guests and the Annunciation are examples of angelic visitations: Joseph's interpretation ("The sun and the moon and the seven stars made obeisance unto me") and the Angels appearing to the Shepherds are linked by the manifestation of worship in the heavens: Hagar is driven out as the Virgin is turned from the inn. Abraham and Melchizedek is an incident which had received many symbolical interpretations, but not as foreshadowing the Adoration, for which the normal Old Testament type was David being brought water from the well of Bethlehem by three of his "mighty men" (2 Sam. xxiii. 15-17). The Coronation of Saul is again a somewhat unexpected parallel to Christ in the Temple, though there is the similarity of the search theme in the two stories: "but when they sought Saul the son of Kish, he could not be found" (1 Sam. x. 21). The Ministration of the Angels to Christ after the Temptation is an unusual subject, selected here as we shall see for particular reasons, and the angels rescuing Lot is an ingenious enough choice for its Old Testament type. In the Passion scenes, with the exception of the Passover and Brazen Serpent, the Old Testament incidents are again not the normal ones but parallels whose point can fairly easily be seen and which in some cases show a close study of the actual text. Shimei curses David saying "behold thou art taken in thy own mischief" and David restrains Abishai from slaying him as Christ at the Betrayal heals Malchus. The scene of Potiphar's wife is an example of false evidence and therefore has some relevance to the closing phase of Christ's trial, though it is no ordinary conjunction. In the Destruction of Pharaoh's Host the artist seems to have found a comparison which was

mainly visual. Pharaoh, who is shown as leading his army, rises up in his heaving chariot, while his warriors struggle in the waters, as below Christ rises from the tomb and the armoured guards fall to the ground.

Certain of the peculiarities in selection may be due to the attempt to preserve a continuous chronology in the Old Testament series as well as in the New Testament. Up to the full wall painting of the Last Judgment, the Old Testament register preserves a rough continuity, and no scene, with the exception of the Coronation of Saul, is much out of order. After the Last Judgment this aim is abandoned. It almost appears as though the New Testament themes had been chosen, and then an attempt made to fit Old Testament types to them without any of the generally recognized handbooks on typology being available, and with the added problem of finding examples that could be arranged chronologically.

Stylistically these paintings, which with the exception of the side walls of the High Altar and some of the small panels in the fourth and fifth bands seem to be by the same artist or group of artists, suggest the Italo-Flemish schools of the late seventeenth century. They are undistinguished but not inexperienced. Western artists were certainly employed by the Safavid rulers. In the Chehel Situn, the garden palace of Shah 'Abbās, there are portraits, some of them of Europeans, which show a reasonable knowledge of Western methods.<sup>1</sup> Earlier in style than those of the cathedral, they show that Western contacts had been established in the arts. Flandin, when he visited Isfahan in 1841, was told that the paintings in the cathedral were due to a rich merchant, Avadik, who had travelled in Italy, where he had formed the opinion that Christian churches were more pleasing to God, the more they were decorated with pictures. "De retour à Djoulfah, il n'eut point de repos qu'il n'eût couvert les murs de l'église épiscopale de tableaux de toutes sortes. Il eut, pour satisfaire cette exigence de sa devotion, à vaincre les résistances du clergé arménien. Mais à force d'instances, de persuasions, et peut-être bien d'argent, car il avait de grandes richesses, il parvint à cacher la blancheur immaculée des murs du sanctuaire sous une profusion de peintures qui ne m'ont d'ailleurs paru dignes d'aucune atten-

tion."<sup>2</sup> This rapid dismissal of the unfortunate wall paintings was presumably based on an æsthetic judgment. And the pictures, if seen in some European church, would seem provincial enough. Found in Isfahan, they at once raise questions as to the men that made them and the problems and difficulties that underlie the elaborate scheme which they evolved.

One source to guide the painters was easily to hand. This was the first printed edition of the Armenian bible which had been begun in Amsterdam in March 1666 and was completed in October 1668. It had been commissioned by the Catholikos of Etschmiadsin, whose agent in Europe for the work was Oskan of Erivan. Oskan had had many difficulties and it was only through the generosity of some Armenian merchants in Genoa that the task was successfully concluded. Oskan told the French savant, de Moni, whom he met in Amsterdam, that the excessive cost of manuscript Bibles was the immediate reason why the printing had been undertaken. There was some alarm in Rome at this unauthorized appearance of Armenian texts, but Oskan succeeded in making arrangements for further printing to be done in Marseilles and it was in that town that he died.<sup>3</sup> The translation is in its way a handsome book. The Bodleian copy, purchased in 1672 for £20, the two volumes bound in one, has a fine contemporary leather binding stamped in gilt and an elaborate floral pattern stamped on the gilt fore-edges.<sup>4</sup> It is illustrated with woodcuts mainly signed by the monogram C.V.S., which is that of Christoph van Sichem, a popular illustrator of the late seventeenth century, but it includes in the Apocalypse a series of prints after Dürer. It was from this illustrated Bible that the cathedral painters drew some of their material. Pharaoh's Host, the Fall of Jericho, Christ and the Doctors, are all based directly on van Sichem's illustrations. The painted version of the angels ministering to Christ

<sup>2</sup> E. Flandin, *Voyage en Perse pendant les années 1840 et 1841*, Paris, 1851, II, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> De Moni, *Histoire critique de la Créance et des Coutumes des Nations du Levant*, Frankfurt, 1684, p. 137. Richard Simon, *Histoire critique des versions du Nouveau Testament*, Rotterdam, 1690, p. 196. A. Abeghian, *Vorfragen zur entstehungsgeschichte der altarmenischen Bibelübersetzungen*, Marburg, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> The Amsterdam edition (1669) of Arakel's History was another piece of Armenian publication. The Bodleian copy of this is also in a contemporary binding and has the same decoration stamped on the goffred fore-edge.

<sup>1</sup> J. Morier, *A Journey through Persia*, London, 1812, I, pp. 167-8.

follows the smallest details of the Bible print, and the curious renderings of the parables such as the fantastic "mote and beam" have the same origin. The copy that they used may well be that still preserved in the cathedral library. Some other books or even single prints may have provided further models: some of the work may have been dependent on memories: but relationships with western markets were close. Julfa and Amsterdam had considerable trade connexions: as to-day one is so aware of the town's connexion with Calcutta, so then the customs and tastes of the Low Countries must have been much in evidence. If the mission of Oskan was cultural in nature, there were many other more strictly mercantile channels by which influences might have come. Here in the painted walls of the cathedral and in the Bible prints are a visual memory of this connexion, a curious and remote bypath of artistic dispersion.

F. S. R. BOASE

## THE GRAVE OF EURIPIDES IN ROBERT BROWNING

Towards the end of Robert Browning's long poem, "Aristophanes' Apology," the following curious lines occur (5679 ff.), in which the poet is speaking about the grave of Euripides in Macedonia:

He lies now in the little valley, laughed  
And moaned about by those mysterious streams,  
Boiling and freezing, like the love and hate,  
Which helped or harmed him through his earthly  
course.

They mix in Arethousa by his grave.  
The warm spring, traveller, dip thine arms into,  
Brighten thy brow with! Life detests black cold.

Through the researches of Tisdell<sup>1</sup> and Spindler<sup>2</sup> we are able to determine exactly the source whence Browning derives his knowledge of Euripides' grave. A. Nauck, in his edition of Euripides,<sup>3</sup> collects all the ancient testimonia, and Tisdell has been able to prove from a catalogue of books once in Browning's possession that an older impression of Nauck's edition belonged to this collection. On this evidence, Spindler<sup>4</sup> con-

cluded that Browning's picture consists of an undigested mixture of these ancient testimonia which he divides into two groups, the first comprising Plut. *Lyc.* 31, Amm. Marc. 27, 4, 8 and Addaeus *Anth. Pal.* 7, 51, where it is merely said that Euripides lies buried near the Macedonian town of Arethusa, and the second consisting of two quotations which we shall examine more closely as being relevant to our subject.

- (i) Plin. *N.H.* 31, 19: "In Macedonia non procul Euripidis poetae sepulchro duo rivi confluent, alter saluberrimi potus, alter mortiferi."
- (ii) Vitruv. *de Arch.* 8, 3: "Non minus in Macedonia quo loci sepultus est Euripides dextra ac sinistra monumenti advenientes duo rivi concurrunt in unum, e quibus ad unum accumbentes viatores pransitare solent propter aquae bonitatem, ad rivum autem qui est ex altera parte monumenti nemo accedit, qui mortiferam aquam dicitur habere."

These passages certainly give us a picture of two streams with water of different character, as Spindler (*loc. cit.*) remarks, but Browning gives us more. He talks about "mysterious streams, boiling and freezing;" a "warm spring," opposed to "black cold." We may ask here: Where did Browning get this notion of a hot and a cold spring, if not from his direct sources? He might, of course, have invented it himself. But it is my intention to show that this contrast between a hot and a cold spring was in Greek literature a standard form of description of mysterious and "Märchen"-like surroundings; and in this case it seems most likely that Browning, with his vast but ill-digested knowledge of ancient literature,<sup>5</sup> has picked up this feature somehow and used it to give his picture of Euripides' burial-place this vaguely mysterious character.

In Homer's *Iliad*, xxii. 145 ff., we find the following description of the springs of the Scamander in the story of Hector's pursuit by Achilles:

οἱ δὲ παρὰ σκοπιῇν καὶ ἔριναδ' ἠνεμοέοντα  
τείχεος αἰὲν ὑπὲρ κατ' ἀμαξίτον ἔσσεύοντο,  
χρουνῶ δ' ἱκανὸν καλλιρρόω· ἐνθα δὲ πηγαί

<sup>1</sup> F. M. Tisdell, *Browning's Aristophanes' Apology*, University of Missouri Studies II. 4, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> R. Spindler, *Robert Browning und die Antike*, Leipzig, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> 3rd ed., Leipzig, 1871, I, p. xxiii, note 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, I, p. 244.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the judgment on Browning in J. A. K. Thomson, *The Classical Background of English Literature*, London, 1948, p. 238.